

The Book-a-Month Study

- Immerse yourself in a book of the Bible for 30 days.
- To begin this study, select the book of the Bible that you want to explore.
- Print book from a Bible Software. Use a folder. Each day's assignment takes about 30 to 45 minutes.
- Use colored highlighters, write notes on printed text.

DAY 1 Read the book out loud in one sitting.

DAY 2 Read the book again. Write down the *big idea* you find in the book.

DAY 3 Read the book again, looking for repeated words or phrases. Write down anything that is repeated; then ask yourself why the author repeats these ideas.

DAY 4 Ask *who*. Write down the names of all the people mentioned. Who are they? Why are they important? Are they mentioned anywhere else in the Bible? Check your concordance. What have you learned about these people? Summarize your discoveries.

DAY 5 Ask *where*. List geographic locations. Which ones are important to understanding this book? Find these locations on a map. Pick one or two cities, and read about them in a Bible dictionary. Write down how this information helps you understand the book.

DAY 6 Ask *when*. Look for words that indicate time: *before, after, while, during, then, no longer, as long as, etc.* This should help you see the sequence of events. What happened in the past? What is presently taking place? What are future events?

DAY 7 Ask *what*. What events take place in this book? What topics does it discuss? Write down your answers.

DAY 8 Observe and record contrasts. These can be broad contrasts between characters, events, or themes. Or they may be more narrow, such as the contrasts within

a paragraph that are identified by the conjunction *but*.

DAY 9 What illustrations does the author use? Are they from everyday life, from other passages of Scripture, from history, or from personal experiences.

DAY 10 List any words you don't understand. Complete the following steps to discover what they mean.

1. How is the word or phrase used in this book? Consider the context. What is the passage talking about? How does the main idea of this passage help you understand the word or phrase? Consider these questions in every instance the word is used.
2. How does the author use the same word or phrase in other books he's written? Use a concordance to help you find this information.
3. Look up the word in a concordance, and investigate the original Greek or Hebrew meaning. (The introduction to the concordance will tell you how to do this.)
4. If you have a word-study book, look up the word.
5. Look up the passage in a commentary to see if anything is mentioned about the word or phrase.
6. Look up the word in the dictionary.
7. Read the passage in another translation.
8. Formulate your definition of the word or phrase using the information you've gathered. Insert your definition into the passage to see if it makes sense. Do you understand the passage more clearly now?

DAY 11 Finish your work from Day 10 if necessary, or investigate the meaning of another word or phrase.

DAY 12 If the book has six chapters or fewer, write a brief summary of each paragraph. If the book has more than six chapters, write summaries of each chapter.

DAY 13 Look carefully at each paragraph, and consider this questions: How does each paragraph lead into the next? Does the paragraph continue to address the same topic as the last one, or does it change topics, characters, ideas, or events? How does this paragraph fit into the overall message—the *big idea*—of the book? How is the material organized: biographically, geographically, chronologically, logically, or thematically?

Does the author answer a series of questions? Does he move from a problem to the solution, from general to specific issues,

or from theology to practical application? (If you are working through a book with more than six chapters, you may want to go chapter by chapter for Day 13.

DAYS 14&15 Continue working through Day 13.

DAYS 16&17 Consider historical background. How did the original audience receive and understand this book?

1. If the book is a letter to the church, answer the following questions.
 - a. When was the church founded? Can you find any information in the book of Acts. Consult a Bible dictionary.
 - b. Who founded the church? How were these original evangelists received?
 - c. Read through the letter to discover the church's strength's and weaknesses.
 - d. Imagine what it would be like to be a member of this church.
 - e. What was the prevailing religious climate in the area? What religious beliefs did these Christians hold prior to their conversion.
2. If the book is a historical narrative, answer the following.
 - a. What was happening in Israel's (or the early church's) history before and after this book?
 - b. What was happening in the surrounding cultures?
 - c. How does this book fit into the overall history of God's people?
3. If the book is one of the prophets, answer the following.
 - a. When did this prophet minister?
 - b. What was happening in Israel at this time?
 - c. To whom was the prophet's teaching directed?

DAY 18 Ask yourself, What type of literature is this book? Learn to recognize the following types of literature and understand their specific characteristics so that you interpret each correctly.

1. Epistles
2. Gospels
3. Apocalyptic literature such as Revelation and parts of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah
4. Historical narratives such as Acts or I or II Samuel
5. Wisdom literature such as Proverbs or Ecclesiastes

DAY 19 Meditate on either the whole book or a certain passage. Spend today

thinking about the book. Write down your insights.

DAY 20 Finish anything you haven't completed, or decide for yourself what aspect of the book you'd like to study today.

DAY 21 Observe progression. Does the author move to a climax of ideas, emotion, or story line? From a question to the answer? From a statement to an illustration? From teaching to application? Record your insights, and then ask the question, Why?

DAY 22&23 Wrestle with a difficult passage. Read through the passage several times and meditate on it. Bombard the passage with *why* questions. Consider the context and the main ideas of the surrounding paragraphs. How does this passage fit into the overall message of the book you are studying? Write down your conclusions, and ask yourself if this is a reasonable interpretation. Does it go against any major teaching in the Bible? Ask three other mature believers what they think about the meaning of this passage. How do their ideas agree or disagree with your conclusions?

DAY 24 Read the entire book again in one sitting. Think again about the overall message.

DAY 25 Reiterate the author's main concern. What does he want readers to know and understand? What are the readers' main concerns? Have they asked certain questions that the author is answering? Write down what you discover.

DAY 26&27 Summarize the basic truths of the book. Ask yourself how they apply to your life. Does the book teach you something you didn't know? Bring correction? Bring encouragement? Help to understand something new about God or man?

DAY 28 In light of what you wrote for Days 26 & 27, ask yourself the following questions: What changes need to take place in my life? Do I need to change what I believe? Do I need to make an adjustment in my relationships with others or with God? Personalize the book for your life.

DAY 29 If you were teaching from this book, how would you challenge your listeners to apply the truths you've discovered?

DAY 30 Pray through the applications you've identified. Write down your prayer as a permanent record of your desire to apply what you've learned.

To complete your study, review what you wrote about the book before you began to examine it in depth. How has your perspective on this book changed? What have you discovered that you didn't know before? Record your answers. Now...decide what book you'd like to do next. This article is an excerpt from Ron Smith's Book *Hooked on the Word*.